



State of Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction

Elizabeth Burmaster, State Superintendent

Date: September 9, 2005

To: District Administrators, Homeless Liaisons, Title I Coordinators, and ESEA Coordinators

From: Elizabeth Burmaster
State Superintendent

Subject: Hurricane Katrina and Homeless Students

On September 2, 2005, I asked all educators to assist students from Louisiana, Mississippi, Alabama, and Florida who have been made homeless and have come to Wisconsin as a result of Hurricane Katrina. Since then, educators, students and parents throughout our state have opened their hearts and school doors. As key administrators and homeless liaisons for your district, you will be a critical contact person for families and unaccompanied youth displaced by Hurricane Katrina. As an update to that first letter, the following information will help you with your district and homeless liaison responsibilities.

HOMELESS STATUS

Some families and unaccompanied youth have come to Wisconsin to live with relatives or friends. Some people are staying in hotels, motels, emergency shelters, or camp grounds while looking for more permanent housing. Some storm victims may move frequently or have children and youth shift between the homes of family and friends. **All of these housing arrangements meet the definition of homelessness under the federal McKinney-Vento Homeless Education Assistance Act.** Additional information on this act may also be found on the National Center for Homeless Education (NCHE) website at www.serve.org/nche. Click on "Hurricane Relief Efforts" at the top of the webpage.

School may be the one area of stability for children and youth who have experienced the hurricane. They have migrated to live in unfamiliar places, are waking up in strange beds or on cots in temporary shelters, and are uncertain of daily living arrangements. School is a place where they can have a regular routine, be around other children and feel like a "normal" kid again. Attached is a guidance document titled "Teachers Helping Homeless Students." This information for staff can play a vital role in helping students feel comfortable in their new schools. Also attached is a "Community Information Directory" form to complete and hand out to homeless families and unaccompanied youth as they come to enroll in your district.

ENROLLMENT

All homeless children, including children and youth who are displaced because of Hurricane Katrina, must be immediately enrolled, even without birth certificates, school records, immunization records, proof of guardianship, or proof of residency. Your district may need to create new student files and make placement decisions based on information gathered from parents and students. A brief assessment in reading, math, and obtaining a writing sample may avoid placing students above or below their academic abilities. Principals may want to schedule a meeting to share with staff how students displaced by Hurricane Katrina will be enrolled, class placement determined, and school records obtained or created.

In addition, the state of Wisconsin has established a toll-free information helpline for evacuees: (866) 211-3380. This "211" relief center will be able to answer calls from evacuees in Wisconsin in need of services. They will be able to refer evacuees and family members to appropriate resources, and will be referring them to their local school

districts for enrollment of children. **Please advise your staff that these calls may be coming to your district and that homeless liaisons should make every effort to answer the calls.**

At the end of this letter is contact information for the state homeless coordinators for Louisiana, Alabama, Florida and Mississippi. In addition, links to websites, where available, are provided for specific guidance on how to access student records in those states. The department will send updated information about who to contact in these states if or when this information is available.

PUPIL COUNTS/TRANSFER OF SERVICE

Districts should include students in their third Friday pupil count that is submitted to the department. We recognize some school districts may possibly enroll students who may not enter school until after the third Friday count date (September 16th this year). In response, we want you to know that school districts have the authority to request a transfer of service exemption to their revenue limit from the department. This law also provides that we review such requests, deduct the estimated amount of state categorical aid (if applicable) the district will likely receive next year for such pupils and determine the amount of the increase to the district's revenue limit.

Due to these extenuating circumstances, we are extending the deadline for these transfers, allowing you to submit a written transfer of service request to our School Financial Services Team for any displaced students from Hurricane Katrina that you anticipate enrolling **after September 16, 2005**. Our staff will review all incoming transfer of service requests related to this issue as quickly as possible. However, in order for such requests to be reviewed in a timely manner, we must receive them **no later than October 3, 2005**. It is critical that we receive this information by this date so that our School Financial Services Team can process your request, calculate your transfer of service exemption, and provide you with this information by October 14, 2005.

We ask that you please keep records on any such students you enroll as this information may be required by the federal government for any possible assistance that may be provided. Please contact either David Carlson, our School Financial Services Director at (608) 266-6968 or Jerry Landmark, our School Financial Services Assistant Director at (608) 266-3464 if you have any questions regarding this issue.

SPECIAL EDUCATION

New students may also need IEP services, as well as additional health and counseling support. If during the process of enrolling the student(s) there is reference to the student having either a) a disability, b) received special education and/or c) had an IEP, respond by following these steps:

1. Ask the parent, or unaccompanied youth, to describe the services the student has been receiving (e.g., learning disabilities, speech/language, O.T, P.T., etc.).
2. Based on the description of the services the student was receiving, immediately begin serving the student.
You do not need to develop an IEP before beginning to provide services to the student.

IDEA 2004 requires schools to provide a free and appropriate public education (FAPE) to out-of-state transfer students upon enrollment. However, you should schedule an IEP team meeting as soon as possible to develop an IEP and determine what evaluations procedures may be needed. More specific guidance on special education services will be coming from the department.

BILINGUAL AND ESL EDUCATION

If during the process of enrolling the student(s), it is apparent that the student is a DPI Level 1, 2 or 3 (beginning-to-developing English proficiency), you may wish to do the following:

1. Consider if the school they are enrolling at has bilingual or ESL services. If so, connect the student immediately with the services they need. ***You do not need to test the student and have a signed “ELL Parent Notification” form prior to serving the student.***
2. If the enrolling school does not have bilingual or ESL services, discuss with the parent the option of having their child attend the next closest school that has such services. If the parent agrees, arrange transportation to the new school.
3. English language proficiency testing and related bilingual or ESL paperwork should occur only after the child is situated and stabilized as a school placement.

COUNSELING SERVICES

Please communicate with your school's pupil services staff so that they may adequately serve the emotional needs of dislocated students that are enrolling in your school.

IMMUNIZATIONS/HEALTH SERVICES

It is likely that children will not have a record of their past immunizations. However, they would have been required to meet the immunization laws of their home state if they were enrolled in schools. A chart of required immunizations for students attending schools in Mississippi, Alabama and Louisiana is attached. This will provide initial guidance as to their immunization status until records can be obtained or regenerated.

Children may also have been exposed to communicable diseases, depending on the living conditions immediately following the hurricane. However, you should consider the children healthy unless there are obvious signs of illness. You may wish to confer with your district medical advisor, school nurse or community health professionals for assistance with screening for illnesses or communicable diseases, as well as for help in obtaining immunization information.

EDUCATIONAL SERVICES

Homeless students are eligible for the following services under McKinney-Vento:

- * free school books and supplies
- * course fee waivers
- * transportation
- * free school meals

Each family or unaccompanied youth must accept the designation of being "homeless" to receive services. If the above resources are not already available, you may want to discuss funding for these services with your district's Title I Coordinator.

FREE SCHOOL MEALS

Homeless students should receive free school meals the day they start school. The district homeless liaison follows the same procedures already established by the US Department of Agriculture (USDA) to obtain immediate free school meals for homeless students. The district homeless liaison prepares a list of students identified as being homeless, writes the date that free meal services should begin, the dates services will end (if known), signs the list, and gives it to the district's nutrition director. The liaison's list of homeless students is acceptable in lieu of a free and reduced price meal application.

In addition, the USDA has just released a memo dated August 31, 2005, outlining simplified procedures for school districts to help Hurricane Katrina refugees. This memo is attached for your review. Please pay particular attention to the fifth bullet in the memo which reviews how host families who have relatives and friends staying with them as

a result of Hurricane Katrina can apply for food benefits. You may want to encourage host families to file a free and reduced meal application. The USDA looks at households, not families, as one economic unit, so the host family should include all displaced family members as part of the application. Please obtain clarification from your local nutrition staff if you have any questions about the application process.

TRANSPORTATION

The McKinney-Vento Homeless Education Assistance Act requires transportation to the "school of origin" for homeless students. "School of origin" is defined as..."the school that the child or youth attended when permanently housed or the school in which the child or youth was last enrolled." While transportation will not be provided back to the state the student was displaced from, the school in Wisconsin in which victims of Hurricane Katrina next enroll will become the student's new "school of origin." The McKinney-Vento Act promotes school stability by allowing homeless students to continue attending the same school, despite residential moves, if it is desired by their parents or guardians. Since students relocated by Hurricane Katrina have already experienced tremendous disruption, it will be critical to keep these students in as stable a school environment as possible.

HOMELESS DATA

Please keep Mary Maronek, Coordinator, Education for Homeless Children and Youth (EHCY) Program, mary.maronek@dpi.state.wi.us or (608) 261-6322, informed if your district experiences a large number of hurricane victims enrolling in your district. Please keep a separate category for hurricane victims when compiling homeless student data. The department, as well as the US Department of Education, will want to know how Wisconsin school districts are being affected by Hurricane Katrina.

STATE HOMELESS COORDINATORS

LOUISIANA

Deidre G. Kibble

Louisiana Department of Education

Division of Special Populations

PO Box 94064

Baton Rouge, LA 70804-9064

Phone: (225) 342-3730 or 877-453-2721

Fax (225) 342-5297

deidre.kibbe@la.gov

Student record request form: <http://www.doe.state.la.us/lde/misc/studentrequest.html>

ALABAMA

Dr. Dorothy Riggins

State Department of Education

5348 Gordon Persons Building

50 North Ripley Street

Montgomery, AL 36130-3901

Phone: (334) 242-8199

Fax: (334) 242-0496

driggins@alsde.edu

FLORIDA

Ms. Betty Applewhite

Florida Department of Education

Bureau of Student Assistance

325 West Gaines, Suite 352

Tallahassee, FL 32399

Phone:(850) 245-0709
Fax: (850) 245-0683
Betty.Applewhite@fldoe.org

MISSISSIPPI
Ms. Gloria White Adams
Central High School Building
359 North West Street
PO Box 771
Jackson, MS 39205-0771
Phone: (601) 359-3499
Fax: (601) 359-2587
gadams@mde.k12.ms.us
Student record information: <http://www.mde.k12.ms.us/MIS/CSSO.doc>

THANK YOU

The department greatly appreciates your efforts to help our neighbors during this difficult time.

Please contact Mary Maronek, Coordinator, Education for Homeless Children and Youth (EHCY) Program, mary.maronek@dpi.state.wi.us or (608) 261-6322 if you have any questions regarding homeless students and the McKinney-Vento Homeless Education Assistance Act. You may also go to <http://www.dpi.state.wi.us/homeless/index.html> for a listing of Wisconsin district homeless liaisons.

For other questions regarding displaced students from Hurricane Katrina, you may contact Michael Bormett at Michael.Bormett@dpi.state.wi.us or (608) 266-2804.